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# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

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## THE INFLUENCE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL UPON EDUCATIONAL METHODS

THE high school is between two fires. More than any other portion of our educational system its work is marked by divided aims, and this through no fault of its own, but through opposed demands made upon it. About the function of the primary school at one end and of the university at the other, there is no dispute. Questions there may be, and are, about the best ways of realizing the end, or just how much the end shall include; but there is no question as to what the school in its main features shall stand for. But the high school occupies no such assured place. I do not refer to those who deny its utility completely. I wish to treat all opinions respectfully, yet I do not think that this question before this body<sup>\*</sup> needs discussion or would suffer it. Carlyle says that a final question about every society is whether or no it possesses *lungs*; whether or no it can take capacity, talent, power for service, born in any section or stratum of society, and bring it to the place where it can do its work. Even though statistics should indicate that a much smaller percentage of pupils than is the case reach and pass through the high school, so long as that institution selects some choice youth and brings them forth to larger opportunity and more efficient service, it shall stand justified.

<sup>\*</sup> This paper was read at the School and College Conference, at the University of Chicago, November 15, 1895.

No, I refer to the opposed aims actually set before the high school by the conditions under which it exists. It must, on the one hand, serve as a connecting link between the lower grades and the college, and it must, upon the other, serve not as a stepping-stone, but as a final stage, as itself the people's college, to those who do not intend to go, or who do not go to college. The academy which is distinctly a preparatory school does not have to contend with this difficulty. While we are thankful for the increasing number and the increasing efficiency of our distinctive preparatory schools, we must also be thankful that the split is not wholly between schools which prepare for college alone and those which do not; but that the division of energies exists within one and the same institution. However difficult the problem for those in charge of the high school, they have the consolation of knowing their sufferings are vicarious—that both primary and university education are reaping the benefits of their struggles. It is a helpful thing for the lower schools, and for the colleges that this conflict has to be faced and fought out within the limits of one and the same school.

It is of these interactions of the high school that I wish to speak—the influence it has exercised upon the rest of the educational system because of the peculiar place it occupies: not so much formally as informally, not so much of conscious purpose as through the conditions it has created. The proposition I wish to put before you is that the high school has been an intermediary in a very real sense; it has been the intermediary between the college, and the non-college business and professional public.

As this intermediary, it has operated to reflect back into the lower grades as much as possible of college ideal and method, thus solidifying and elevating the intellectual possessions of the public which never sees the college doors. There has been university extension by unconscious permeation, by indirect radiation. On the other hand, by practically compelling the college to adjust itself to the conditions of its preparatory constituency, it has served to break down the monastic and scholastic survivals in education, and to so modify the college aims and

means as to bring them into much closer contact with everyday life. There are those who regret this as a departure from the self-included literary aims and spirit of the college, but to them I do not address myself. It is not necessary to be a spiritual recluse in order to escape being a Philistine.

First, as to the effect upon the university. As long as the academy existed primarily as a mere preparatory school for the college, its influence upon the college was of necessity slight. Action and reaction did not appear to be equal. But given a high school having other aims than those supplied by the college, another constituency to which it is responsible, and the college faces a serious problem. It must adjust itself more or less to the conditions thus created; it must meet the competition of this other environment of the high school, and so modify its courses and methods as to offer equal or superior attractions. It is led out into the struggle for existence and must exhibit its fitness to survive.

The fact is that certain changes in the policy, curriculum and methods of the college were initiated more promptly in the West than in the East, and were carried out with less discussion, almost from necessity, and with little consciousness of their radical nature. In the East these changes came, if at all, only as the results of long discussion, and often of the strong will of some educational reformer. The difference is due, I think, more than to anything else, to this fact; in the West the college was dependent upon a high school to whose independent volition it had to adjust itself; while the eastern college was in relation to a preparatory school which had to follow, almost blindly, the lead of the college.

As the outcome, the logic of the situation brought on certain changes in the West as a matter of practical wisdom, as a matter, it might be said, of obvious business prudence. These changes grew out of the educational soil. In the East, these changes had to be tenderly matured and skillfully grafted by some university gardener. The main changes in the college curriculum of the West during the last twenty-five years, changes in which the West

preceded the East, were precisely those required by the status and needs of the high school. I refer to such matters as the coeducation of the sexes, which in the West corresponded to the mixed high school, just as the separate colleges of the East were the logical complements of the boys' preparatory school and the young ladies seminary; to the diversification of courses; the introduction of Latin, modern language and science courses into the curriculum upon the same level with the Greek course, instead of in side schools, or as temporary concessions to the weakness of the human mind. That this diversification is not yet ended is evident from the fact that the university, within whose walls we are gathered, made provision, in its original statement, for a course in commercial and political science. When this precedent is generally followed, it may be said that the action of the high school upon the college, in the way of securing a complete outlet for itself, will be complete. Add to these things the introduction of greater range of selection of studies, and, in a less formal way, the introduction of consultation and coöperative methods between high school and college, and we have a broad, if sketchy, picture before us of the great changes wrought in the college curriculum and methods, in virtue of the conditions created by the high school. It is not empty conceit for the high school representative to congratulate himself upon having been an important factor in bringing these changes about.

But the high school has been an intermediary in another direction. It has not only brought a pressure upon the college, which has turned the latter to walk more closely parallel with life, but it brought pressure from the college and discharged it upon the lower grades. This reflex influence upon primary and intermediate work has arisen upon its face, through the need of securing a better preparation for college, doing more work in the same time and doing it better. But the outcome has been to give a deeper and a higher preparation for life to those who never see or think of college—who never even reach the high school.

The weakest point in our school system has been the grades from the fourth to the eighth, whether tested by methods used or results reached. Before this time the child has had a sense of power in learning to read and write; after this, instead of using his powers to master new fields, he goes on reading and writing. He has been gaining skill in drawing, in mastering numbers—he now goes on drawing and figuring. At the outset he has had the delight of an introduction to a new and expanding world; suddenly, the horizon walls shut down, and the child is confined to filling in his narrowed world with more or less repugnant details. From the satisfaction that comes by contact with the new, he has been switched off into the dissatisfaction that comes with the endless turning over of the old. The benumbing, mechanical influence which is the serious evil of the average American school today is in full operation.

But a change has been occurring, and evidences multiply that the demand for the change is reaching an acute point. Within a dozen years, the university has thrown back an additional year's work upon the high school; within twenty, it has probably thrown back almost two years, besides demanding better work in quality. The high school has been able to meet this demand, and will be able to meet further demands which the college is likely to make, only by turning back and demanding better work, and work different in spirit and newer in method, from the lower grades. Much of this movement is in promise, rather than in evidence. But the signs are many and multiplying. There is the introduction into the lower grades of geometry and algebra, taught by rational methods, in place of the numerical contortions of the average arithmetic; the substitution of literary masterpieces as wholes for the grind of continuing to learn to read broken off fragments after one has already known how to read several years<sup>1</sup>; the acquaintance with history at something like second-hand, at least, instead of the memorizing of text-books; the extension of science work

<sup>1</sup> It is a common statement (and a common fact) that the child, upon entering the eighth grade does not read aloud with as much ease and effectiveness as upon entering the fourth.

and the introduction of simple experimental and observational methods; finally, the introduction of foreign language work (whether ancient or modern, I will not dogmatize) to that degree found to be advisable to give any child command of his own powers, whether he go to college or not.

Now all this intensification and enriching, past, present, and especially prospective, is very largely the outcome of the pressure of the university upon the high school, reflected down and back. No other influence, save the introduction of manual training, has compared with this; and that has been largely induced and fostered by the introduction of engineering courses in the college, and the founding of higher technological schools.

Is the influence of the high school upon educational methods exhausted in the lines already spoken of? There is one great possibility, as yet unrealized, so far as any systematic effort is concerned. This is the preparation by the high school of teachers for the lower grades. The simple fact is that this *is* one of its chief functions at present, but the high school is doing it only incidentally and unsystematically. My query is whether the high school must not awaken to consciousness of what it is already doing by the way, and make that one of its chief functions. The query is whether the high school stands quite justified before the community, until it shall recognize and equip itself for this task; whether the performance of this function would not do away with the last vestige of grumbling about, and attack upon, the high school.

Certain facts stand out beyond any peradventure. Fact one, there is not a sufficient recognition of the need of professional training to send all would-be teachers to the normal school; fact two, the normal schools are not numerous enough nor well enough endowed at present to fit all possible teachers; fact three, the normal schools have at least half their time taken up, at present, with high school, non-professional work; fact four, the average school board will rarely go outside its own town and school system for a teacher in the "grades." Conclusion; the high school is the chief source of supply, and, therefore, *must*

*be the chief hope and mainstay*, in the matter of furnishing teachers for the lower grades.

This being the case, the only cause for surprise is, not to hear put forth the idea that the high school should consciously assume this responsibility, but that the public has so long tolerated the fact that it has not assumed it. It is true that many of the high schools now have training classes, as graduate courses, annexed to them. This is undoubtedly a great help. But this is not precisely what I have in mind. I mean that the high school, in its own organization, should regularly provide for the training of capable teachers for the lower grades.

Now I suppose the feeling of many of you in sympathy with the general trend of these remarks is that, under existing circumstances, such an undertaking is impracticable. The curriculum is already overcrowded; we want fewer courses, rather than more; fewer studies rather than more. We are already at our wits' end because of the pressure from the university, on one side, and that of the business sense of our community on the other; and lo and behold! here is a proposition to add still more to our burdens. I reply "amen" to the spirit of this response. But I believe that when anything really requires doing, the attempt to do it will introduce order and ease rather than confusion and hardship. I believe we are bound to assume this even if we cannot see our way clearly through in detail. But there are certain suggestions which may be made in the line of indicating where the principle of order and economy will be found.

1. In the first place, the introduction of a training course would give a practical motive for doing much work now done without any sense of its bearings. We all agree—or almost all—with great cheerfulness to the proposition that character, not information, is the end of education, and then tamely submit to, or wilfully create conditions which make it impossible that the school should be an active force in character building. But the greatest of these conditions is that the information gained does not find outlet in action. Absorption, income is the rule—and then we wonder whether learning tends to selfishness!

I do not believe any more helpful inspiration could come into any school than the conviction that what is being learned must be so learned that it may be of service in teaching others.<sup>1</sup> This is not the place to discuss ways and means of practice work, but I believe the solution of this difficult problem will be in the discovery that it is stupidity to suppose that there is no alternative between no practice teaching, and the turning over of whole classes to the pupil-teacher at the outset. The latter method of necessity throws the teacher into a mechanical attitude, it not only does not tend to, but it hinders, the development of sympathy and psychological insight. The proper place of the pupil-teacher is as a helper, here, there and anywhere that he can discover something to do, dealing with a few individuals in their personal difficulties, rather than with the "teaching" of a class *en masse*. This personal relationship once secured, the pupil-teacher will be in a healthy attitude when dealing with a class as a whole. Moreover this method would go far to relieve that congestion where one teacher deals with from forty to sixty pupils.

2. A training course does not mean so much new subjects for study as a new interest in, and a new point of view for existing subjects. I do not think physiology would be any the less well learned as physiology if emphasis were thrown upon questions of ventilation, of hygienic seats and postures, of the importance of correct muscular attitudes and gymnastic exercises, of the use and education of the senses of touch, sight and hearing, and a thousand other points. What is true of physiology is true in kind, even if in less degree, of all the sciences. It is not so obviously true of the languages and of history, but even here contact with the needs and methods of younger children would serve to fertilize rather than to deaden the material. What is required in any case is a selection and adjustment of subjects already taught, rather than a large number of new studies.

<sup>1</sup>I hope I may be pardoned for repeating what an instructor of one of our best high schools said to me in private conversation—it went so much beyond what I dared say. It was that *no* person ought to be allowed to graduate from the high school until he had put to use his knowledge in teaching; that this was the best test and the best guarantee for sure assimilation.

3. Two new studies however are required. These are psychology and social ethics. If asked eight or even five years ago about the admissibility of introducing the subject of psychology into the high school, I hesitated and doubted its wisdom save under very exceptional circumstances. For various reasons, the danger was great that psychology would be made a formal thing, the study of a text-book, with its definitions and classifications, rather than of psychical life itself; a study pursued by memorizing very largely. There was a possibility, if not a probability, that the text-book used would be a rehash of the state of the subject as it was fifty years ago. But this is now changed. One can have these out-of-date books and follow dead and mechanical methods if he will, but other and fresher possibilities are easily open. There are plenty of new books, new in material and methods; there are simple experimental appliances and methods to be utilized; the whole subject of child-study has grown up. Psychology, for the high schools, has undergone a change from a mechanical thing fossilized and mummified in out-of-date books, and pigeon-holed to rigidity, into a living human thing.

None the less, it will be said, this means the introduction of a new study into a crowded curriculum. I won't suggest that certain things might give way and that the study of the human nature which lies in us, and in whose expressions we live and have our deepest contacts and relations, has claims equal to various and sundry subjects which I will not mention. Such a suggestion might seem extreme and utopian, and I'll not make it.

But a few facts may be selected indicating that this new study would serve to relieve rather than congest the course of study. In the first place the period covered by the high school is the age of adolescence. This is the natural age of introspection. There is no time of life when the interest in self, and in the relations and adjustments of self to others is so pressing and conscious as at this time. If metaphysics is a disease, like mumps and measles, then this is the time when it is epidemic. The failure to utilize this interest is a pedagogic blunder. It is a blunder in the economy of the school; it is a blunder from the standpoint of

the pupil, who has one of the most educative of all interests left without direction and so liable to perversion and distortion. So far is it from true that psychology would lead to morbid self-consciousness, that in many cases the tendency to morbidness both in one's self and in relation to others is a harassing and grievous fact; and the conscious direction of this tendency in a scientific channel would be one of the greatest, if not the greatest, means for purging it of its morbidness. Moreover many of the studies of the high school would be greatly reinforced in interest and greatly lessened in difficulty by the judicious introduction of the right sort of psychology. If we take literature on its formal side, rhetoric and grammar, it *is* psychology, and logic allied to psychology; a failure to recognize this psychological basis and import means the erection of artificial difficulties. Of literature in its content, its æsthetic and moral values, much the same is true. The teaching of literature is continually swinging from a sentimental and falsely philosophic standard on one side to the dwelling upon merely technical matters of information, etc., on the other. The student is either required to descant upon the moral lessons conveyed, to formulate appreciations of the various kinds of beauties presented (formulations of necessity conventional and second-hand), or the text becomes a peg upon which to hang the dictionary and encyclopædia. A rational introduction of some of the recent methods and results regarding the imagination and the emotions would do more, I think, than all else put together to give both freshness and substance to the study of literature. History affords the same opportunity for discussions of questions of habit and character, purpose and motive. The study of the sciences demands some account of the processes of observation and reasoning and the main types of inference, etc.<sup>1</sup>

By social ethics, I mean, again, not a study of a formal text-

<sup>1</sup> Professor Münsterberg says (p. 19, of an address before the Mass. Schoolmaster's Club): "The chief facts of seeing and hearing, attention and memory, perception and imagination, feeling and will, dreams and illusions, could become an extremely important and suggestive part of the school education, not as a special branch of the school curriculum, but sprinkled into the whole school work."

book but the observation and discussion of certain obvious phases of actual social life. The adult's interest in social life has become so specialized and so technical, and also so much a matter of course, that he continually fails to realize the force and vividness with which social interests and problems press upon the inquiring and observing child.

Political economy has had much the same history as psychology in the high school; first introduced, and then, upon the whole, discredited, and both rightly so, without doubt, under the circumstances. But there is a study of economic forces and interactions actually at work which is highly interesting and important as well as of ethical content, and which forms the basis for unifying work in history, geography and the sciences—as the numerous points where physics and chemistry touch processes of manufacture and distribution.

To sum up the matter in terms of the current agitation of the correlation of studies, psychology as a concrete study of human nature in the individual, and sociology as the concrete study of human nature in its organized forms, are the natural bases for unification of studies in the high school, whether we look at the dominant interests and impulses of the pupil at this age, or at the material studied.<sup>1</sup> This seems to me to constitute a fair basis for the claim that these studies would introduce order rather than confusion, work for ease rather than for hardship in the high school economy.

The schools already have a certain running machinery, a certain prescribed and acquired *modus operandi*; teachers have their acquired tastes and habits. It is not easy to readjust these. I do not propose what I have said as a model to be at once and everywhere conformed to. But I believe the high schools must soon face the question of affording a course of training for would-be teachers in the lower grades, and that it behooves those who have any responsibilities in the shaping of the educational struc-

<sup>1</sup> It will be noticed that I have said nothing of the separate study of systematic pedagogy. The omission is not accidental, but the reasons cannot be given here. There is a certain division of labor in the training of teachers with reference to which I hope to write in the future.

ture to give serious attention to this matter, and to shape the modifications which continually occur in this direction. When this function shall be taken in by the high school, I believe the influence of the high school upon educational methods will be at its full tide—a tide which will never ebb.

JOHN DEWEY

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO